The Seed Sower.

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Where did it Go?

Where did yesterday's sunset go
When it faded down the hills so slow,
And the gold grew dim, and the purple light
Like an army with banners passed from sight?
Will its flush go into the golden rod,
Its thrill to the purple aster's nod,
Its crimson fleck the maple bough,
And the autumn glory begin from now?

Deeper than flower fields sank the glow
Of the silent pageant passing slow.
It flushed all night in many a dream,
It thrilled in the folding hush of a prayer,
It glided into a poet's song,
It is setting still in a picture rare;
It is changed by the miracle none can see
To the shifting lights of a symphony;
And in resurrections of faith and hope
The glory died on the shining slope,
For it left its light on the hills and seas
That rim a thousand memories.—*W. C. Gannett.*

A Thorn. (*From the Persian.*)

There was a merchant once, who on the way
Meeting one fatherless and lamed, did stay

To draw the thorn which pricked his foot, and passed;
And 'twas forgot; and the man died at last.

But in a dream the Prince of Khojand spies
That man again, walking in paradise.

Walking and talking in the blessed land,
And what he said the prince could understand;

For he said this, plucking the heavenly posies:
"Wonderful! One thorn made me many roses."
—*Sir Edwin Arnold.*

The School for Saints.*

A SERMON BY THE

REV. J. WARSCHAUER, M.A.

"*If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.*"—St. John xiv. 15.

When the religious history of the present age comes to be written fifty or a hundred years hence, by men in whom the names of Martineau and Newman, Pusey and Jowett, Maurice and Spurgeon will only evoke those impersonal emotions with which we ourselves read of Butler or Berkeley or Wesley, one charge, at any rate, will hardly be made against our times; our unborn critics, provided they are properly informed, will probably come to the conclusion that if this was an age of much religious uncertainty, it was not by any means an age of religious indifference; on the contrary, that if there was much groping in the dark, and many confusing cries, there was, at least, no lack of interest in the fundamental problems of religion. The very agnosticism of the times was not a standing aside from the discussion of religious questions, but rather a resolute endeavour to see more clearly into them, and to accept nothing on hearsay that seemed legitimately open to doubt; the renewed zest with which the sacred literature of Judaism and Christianity

* "The School for Saints," a Novel by John Oliver Hobbes.—T. Fisher Unwin, 1897.

was studied and compared with those of other faiths, bore witness to the same temper; the remarkable revival even of sacerdotalism showed that large numbers were seeking with feverish anxiety and a certain pathetic eagerness to reach some certitude of belief; while one of many symptoms, however subordinate, testifying to this state of things was the long list of books which, under the guise of fiction, attempted to deal with matters of theology, and the eager welcome which was accorded to this class of literature by many thousands of general readers.

I wish to day to speak of a very remarkable book of this order, recently published by one of the most prominent of our younger authors, in the interests of Roman Catholicism. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say that the author of "The School for Saints," the gifted lady who elects to be known as John Oliver Hobbes, is herself a convert to the religion she now advocates, though a Presbyterian by birth, and that she came before the public in the first place about five years ago through the publication of some short stories, which revealed the possession of very unusual qualities. Consummate grace of style, a wit that was fairly amazing, evidences of wide reading and original thinking, combined to make a whole that arrested attention and prompted prophecies of fame for the young writer—prophecies which already have been very amply fulfilled. At the same time her Catholic predilections became more apparent as story succeeded story, until at last in "The School for Saints" she has entered the arena as the avowed propagandist of a system of religion for whose championship she is admirably fitted by her training and temperament alike.

It is perhaps right to say that in this, as in so many "novels with a purpose," the author does herself most justice where the purpose is least insisted upon. On what a lofty plane Mrs. Craigie moves when she gets, so to speak, out of sight of her theology, may be judged from an utterance like the following:—"While a sleepless night for our neighbour's woe may not assist him materially in his trouble, we know that the Divine economy permits nothing to be wasted. Every unselfish thought sends a lasting fragrance into the whole moral atmosphere of the world." This is a fine idea, finely expressed; and again and again we come upon similar aphorisms attesting a serene and unbroken consciousness of God.

Turning to Mrs. Craigie's method, we find it to differ essentially from that pursued by such writers as Mrs. Humphry Ward. We are not, that is to say, presented with the spiritual history of some man who, after passing through severe crises of mind and soul, exchanges one form of religion for another. This difference of method is, as we said, quite intelligible. Rome does not reason so much as advance imposing claims; her chief argument lies in her own continuity, in her existence and persistence as a great fact; she seeks to impress rather than to convince.

And thus, in Mrs. Craigie's book, the story itself does not matter nearly as much for her purpose, or to the reader, as, *e.g.*, the plot of "Robert Elsmere;" her hero, Robert Orange, does indeed join the Roman communion, but only, so to say, incidentally, and at quite an early stage in his career, no special reasons being assigned for his conversion. In spite of reflections upon Religion and discussions of the Church, freely scattered through the book, these do not constitute a serious attempt to convince the heretic; what the writer does instead, and with inimitable art, is to create a Catholic atmosphere, to show us men and women actuated by an intense conviction that they are in possession of the truth, a conviction which is quite free from any doubt, from any suspicion, that another view, might be truer. That, after all, is the traditional Roman strategic device, not so much to combat doubt as to ignore it, to minimise its significance, to affect to regard it as something altogether abnormal, a disorder of the soul. Add to this attitude of unalterable certainty, the fine and spotless characters of Robert Orange and Brigit Parflete—both high-minded, chivalrous, incapable of mean or common thoughts, and it is difficult to resist, at first sight, the impression that a religion which inspires such lives and commands the unfaltering fealty of such paragons, may have claims to our allegiance, too.

It is therefore fortunate, especially as the initial problems of theology are never touched, and orthodoxy is not discussed, but simply

accepted in all its fulness—it is fortunate that at least once in the course of the book Mrs. Craigie gives us something like an explicit statement of the true inwardness of Roman Catholicism—not of its particular doctrines, but of its *ēthos* the spirit which underlies them. It is with this passage, rather than with the story of "The School for Saints" that I wish to deal, and which I intend to quote, inviting your attention to its contents.

"The Divine Voice" says Robert Orange, when on the brink of conversion, "I have never doubted, but I have often wished that I could hear it more plainly. When it pleads from the Roman Church, I am deeply moved; I am not, however, fully persuaded that I hear aright. When it threatens from the Protestant pulpit, I am more nearly persuaded, but I am not moved in the least. The Protestants insist on the virtues—you must assume them if you have them not—the Catholics lay more stress on the sacraments. Now the virtues are, after all, the product of philosophy. Jewish ethics, under the old dispensation, were barbarous, when we compare them with the precepts taught by the Pagan moralists, who had, nevertheless, no hope and were without God in the world. The philosophic mind is not told by the Hebrew prophets. . . . . One might be perfectly virtuous in every human relation, and yet possess an irreligious soul. On the other hand, one might be absolutely convinced of God's revelation of Himself, and yet sin against every canon of right conduct. The devil, *e.g.*, must have a sure knowledge of God; his fault was treachery, not disbelief. This thought has . . . . helped me to understand why your Church is so much more severe toward pride of intellect than against the natural weakness of the heart. . . . I think it conceivable that God would forgive even Satan if he would but repent and love Him. Humanly speaking, so long as we feel that we are really loved, we can forgive much. The faults of those who love us are more acceptable than the virtues of those who treat us with neglect. I fully comprehend, therefore, why it should be a more vital necessity in the Christian life to attend mass than to keep a stoic's temper. Faith in God does not in itself alter the fundamental characteristics of a man's disposition. It seems to me unjust, therefore, to call any person a hypocrite because, while in creed a Christian, he is in the struggle for life, greedy, untruthful, malicious or worse. Strive for the calm temper, by all means, if you have not received it,—as many have received it just as some are blessed with good health, or fine possessions, or a serene mind—but never suppose that natural graces of character, or acquired stoicism or Platonism, or any other ism without acts of devotion to God will avail you at the judgment."

I have quoted at such length in order to guard against misrepresenting Mrs. Craigie; but I confess that even as I read over this mass of brilliant sophistry, I cannot but feel sorrowfully aware of the warping and perverting influence, upon a mind by nature noble and penetrating, of the system of casuistry associated with Rome and its works. That every word I have transcribed is set down by Mrs. Craigie in good faith, it would be a gross insult to doubt; but it is because of the unhappy closeness with which truth and error are interwoven in this statement, because of the fatal ease with which the reader is led from apparently harmless premisses to the most pernicious conclusions, and because of the wide circulation and consequent influence of everything that this fascinating author writes, that I wish to scatter some of the dangerous and mischievous fallacies she here expounds.

The Protestants, says Mrs. Craigie, lay greater stress on the virtues, the Catholics on the sacraments; and it is her object to show that the virtues play a subordinate part as compared with the performance of such acts of devotion as attending mass and receiving the sacraments—in fact, that one may be a good Christian while leading a "greedy, untruthful, or malicious" life, so long as one accepts the doctrines involved in these practices, and at the same time more acceptable to God than the pure and virtuous sceptic or heretic. Now any conclusion that seemingly invalidates the supremacy of the moral law ought to set us on our guard against the initial assumptions and logical processes on which it is built up; somewhere, we may be sure, in the principle or its application, we shall come upon the flaw. And in the present instance we have not far to seek.

For it is simply not true that "the virtues are,

after all, the product of philosophy." The human mind discovers—it does not invent—the great facts of the universe. Philosophy may give us a theory of ethics, may elaborate moral distinctions, may dwell upon questions of merit and guilt,—but it does not invent or create the virtues any more than it invents or creates truth. Truth and virtue already exist, long before philosophy speculates about the one or theorises about the other, and the origin of virtue is proclaimed in the immortal words of one of those Hebrew prophets by whom, according to the latest advocate of Rome, "the philosophic mind was not told;" "*He* hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And Mrs. Craigie herself contradicts her earlier assertion when she says that the moral disposition—which she seeks to disguise as well as to belittle by calling it "the stoic's temper"—is received by many as a gift, *i.e.*, certainly without philosophical reflection, and presumably from God. So that whichever way we regard the matter, the virtues are the result, not of philosophy, but of Divine ordinance, their sanctions are not human, but Divine! and he who violates their commands offends, not against fallible speculations and statutes, but against Almighty God.

Incidentally it may be remarked that the Pagan moralists were not, as Mrs. Craigie says, without hope and without God in the world. On the contrary, Plato and Aristotle and Cleanthes, Epictetus and Seneca and M. Aurelius were all devout believers in God, and nearly all hoped in the world to come. A little rudimentary exactness on matters of fact might be desirable in those who aspire to instruct us on matters of faith.

But we now come to the amazing assertion that "one might be absolutely convinced of God's revelation of Himself, and yet sin against every canon of right conduct." Here, again, a closer acquaintance with that "Pagan moralist" and divine philosopher, Plato, might have helped to save Mrs. Craigie from a dangerous and anti-moral fallacy. It would have taught her that right knowledge is the inspirer of right action, or that, to use Platonic language, virtue is a form of knowledge, and vice a form of ignorance. It is quite possible to be clearly convinced of God's existence at one time, and at another to sin against right; but universal religious experience bears out the fact that at the moment when we are most deeply conscious of the Divine Reality, we are least prone to evil. With all the emphasis whereof I am capable, I protest against the doctrine that "faith in God does not in itself alter the fundamental characteristics of a man's disposition." If it does not do that—if it does not transform and refine a man's character—then it may be a highly ingenious metaphysical theory, but is nevertheless as dead as the body apart from the spirit is dead.

Unfortunately, however, this is not yet the lowest depth, the most pernicious error, to which our author is led by sheer obliquity of vision, or rather, by vicious theological prepossessions. Quite overlooking the obvious fact that true knowledge of God must as infallibly bring us to a true love of Him as to right conduct, and seemingly oblivious of the universal truth embodied in the simple saying—"If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments," she advances the astounding proposition—which I venture to translate into less ambiguous language than hers—sthat the sins of those who "love" God, and perform acts of devotion, may be more acceptable to Him than the righteousness of those who do not. Here I am bound to say Mrs. Craigie falls below the ethical standard, both of the prophets, whom she affects to look down upon, and of the Pagan moralists, who had the disadvantage of not being Catholics. For the former are forever inveighing against outward "acts of devotion" apart from practical goodness, and one of the latter—Plato again—directs in a well-known passage his most scathing satire against those who hoped "by sinning and praying, and praying and sinning" to make the best of both worlds. That love to God without obedience to Him is a contradiction in terms, we have already observed; but to imagine that He regards the attendance at mass of a believer, so to say, in the light of a compliment paid to Himself, and the non-attendance of the heretic in that of a slight or "neglect;" or that the Most High is so pleased with the devout zeal of the pious Catholic that He will forgive his mere

moral delinquencies; nay, that He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity will look upon these as "more acceptable" than the blameless lives of unbelievers; all this argues a conception of God, man, faith, duty, forgiveness, so perverse, so unworthy, that one would rather attribute it to the system than to its advocate. If the writer does not feel that to impute to God this kind of petty self-love, gross favouritism, and manifest injustice, is to affront His Most Holy Name, we can only deplore it, and pray that all mankind may be delivered from such grievous mistakes.

Fortunately it is not probable that a "love" of God whose highest expression are formal acts of adoration, and which is compatible with a "greedy, untruthful, or malicious" life, will ever again commend itself or appeal to any large proportion of our people. The healthy moral instincts which Protestantism has fostered for generations will, in all likelihood, continue to tell English men and women that whosoever assures them that God will smile upon their offences, so long as they profess to "love" Him, assures them of the thing that is not. But we have need to be on our guard. This is the kind of doctrine that has ruined Catholic Europe; it is our right and our duty to protect our country against its infection. We have to insist over and over again that "righteousness exalteth a nation," and to cry aloud and spare not where we see that this sure foundation of national greatness and individual character is being undermined "by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error." Suchlike teachings it is our sacred duty to withstand to the face, giving place to their disseminators in the way of subjection—no, not for an hour.

That the knowledge of God, the love of God, and obedience to God are, not three, but one; that conduct is above creed, in this world and in all worlds; that the moral law is supreme, as the expression of God's blessed Will: by this we have to stand, this to reiterate, this to act out in our lives. Lest haply we, after that we have been made free with freedom, should be "entangled again in a yoke of bondage;" or lest there be sent upon the people "a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," because "they received not the love of the truth."

At a Cymanfa.

"What at?" most of your readers will exclaim, to whom this word will convey as much meaning as did the term "*locum tenens*" to "Truthful Jeames" on one occasion. The honest servant, having to answer a caller's inquiries concerning his master—a clergyman, who was from home recruiting after an illness, was interrogated, "*locum tenens*, I suppose?" Whereupon he gravely replied, "no sir, the old complaint—gout."

"Cymanfa" has no occult signification, but is a common Welsh word. "Festival" is generally given as a translation. However, like another member of the same family, the word Eisteddvod (which history doth report some Saxons have, with great pains, wrought into their vocabulary, and bring forth to conversational light in some garbled form) it is strictly untranslatable. Readers with philological leanings will recognise in "Cymanfa" the same root as in the Latin *communis*.

The term is applied to the great preaching gatherings which are a prominent feature of the religious life of what is pre-eminently a land of preachers, whereunto godly folk do congregate to listen unweariedly to lengthy discourses which follow each other in mighty succession. At a recent Congregationalist Festival, held in South Wales, no fewer than sixty sermons were delivered, apart from shorter addresses, though the meetings only extended from Saturday night to the following Monday evening. Presumedly, there were breaks for food and rest, though such material things hardly count at such seasons of spiritual refreshing.

The term is also applied to those Musical Festivals, which are in favour with all denominations in the Principality. It was my good fortune to attend such a festival, held by the Welsh Unitarians of Cardiganshire, early in June. Welsh churches have settled the choir problem satisfactorily and for all time. The whole congregation is choir. Everybody sings. There are, nevertheless, degrees of perfection.

To raise the standard of congregational singing, and for the purpose of introducing new hymns and tunes, a programme is drawn up every year, which all the churches in a particular district prepare by holding practices after service

and during week-nights. On a fixed date, the singers assemble to share in a feast of concords of sweet sounds and demonstrate their brotherhood in a common flow of song. The singing of hymn-tunes is supplemented by anthems and sacred solos.

On an ideal summer day, some ten congregations sent their musical enthusiasts to a local Bayreuth, where they did nothing but sing.

The place of meeting in this instance was the chapel of Llwynrhydowen (the Grove at Owen's Ford), which is a monument of the triumph of brave faith over bigotry. Twenty years ago, through the subterfuge of a legal defect in a Trust Deed, the worshippers were cast out from a sanctuary close by, where they and their fathers before them had congregated for generations, and whose ground the graves of their beloved had sanctified. Every inch on the hill side on which this present edifice stands is holy ground — sacred as the centre of the locality where freedom waged stern conflict with Tory tyranny and its priestly confederacy, and memories of the "martyrs of '68" in the cause of political and religious liberty brood in hallowed tutelage, and create the special "genius" of the spot. Favoured by nature, and rich in loveliness of hill and stream and woodland, the place becomes more deeply dear to the lieges of Ceredig, to whom every breath of air is laden with poetic suggestions of bards like Dewi Castellhywel, or instinct with stirring associations of prophets and reformers like Gwilym Marles. These and others, though dead, yet speak, and make this resort more than a Mecca to Welsh Unitarians.

Hither the Cardis came together, and here they sang, from ten in the morning, as never the morning stars sang together, and held on, with only a brief break for lunch, until past five in the evening. Were they tired? They were fresher at the finish than at the start. Singing is as natural to them as breathing. They would sing until they dropped into sleep from sheer exhaustion, and then they would sing in their dreams.

And such singing! No wonder the conductor expressed a wish they would sing as long as he lived, and that his life's span might be Methusaleh's. Now such a conductor as conducted this day is a remarkable embodiment of the Celtic spirit. Named with a fine sense of humour, "Eiddil" *i.e.*, "without energy," he is a living denial of his own musical title. Words cannot describe the rich dramatic power, the infinite variety of the subtle phases of delicate expressiveness which rippled over his features, as they shone with the radiant light of hope, or darkened 'neath the suggestion of wrong, or grew tender with pity for pain. His function was to interpret the varying meaning of the words by action and expression, and as every singer, with eyes rivetted on his, read, so they sang; and, under sway of his baton, the whole gamut of human emotion was traversed with unspeakable effect. Now the basses rolled out in deep and solemn tones the opening bars of "Danville," "Pob dydd," &c., whose sentiment is germane to Macbeth's "To-morrow and To-morrow." Now, upon the closing cadence of "Rutherford," silvery sopranos gave sweet assurance of the eternal hope, "Not one life shall be destroyed," while altos and tenors floated in descending and ascending lines of harmony between, as they rose in rapturous praise or sank in murmurs of submission.

When the high tide of inspired enthusiasm would be reached, the singers could not stop for dear delight, and the last verse would be repeated four or five times with varying effect of impassioned earnestness, soft cooing of persuasive charm, or sweet ecstasy of inextinguishable faith.

Part of the proceedings was devoted to children's tunes, for the Sunday school is part and parcel of church life in Wales, not a separate institution. Besides solos, a break was afforded by the distribution of certificates of all stages, granted by the Tonic Solfa College. It was a happy sight to watch dairy maids and cow boys go up for intermediate certificates, and the presence of married men and women among youths, showing the interest and energy manifested by even the Welsh peasantry in music.

These poor folk, with thoughtful countenances, these lads, with brave frank faces 'neath a mass of curls, these lasses, with rosy cheeks under dark lovelit eyes, carried such assurance of possession of the secret of happiness, that the student of dry metaphysics and weary unraveller of life's problems might well behold them with envy.

The path of duty of which they sang so joyously, became, under the spell of their song, a veritable path of glory—they made the goodness—which was their theme, no less easy than irresistibly attractive. Somewhat too much they perhaps sang of the joys of the home above, and the bliss of Heaven, but if the very angels did not bend to listen to them, then the angels do not know a good thing when they hear it. Among the sounds of transport at the delights of Devachan, one longed for the whisper of the coming of the kingdom upon earth. But to those who heard the voices and saw the faces betokening perfect health and happiness, it was clear that the longed-for heaven was but a form of the ideal of love and peace and righteousness; while to the burdened souls in the chapel grounds outside, who listened while they stood above the resting place of their beloved, and watched the fir-tipped hill opposite against the cloud-flecked sky, who can tell how much consolation lay in the gentle pathos of the strains in the minor key that depicted repose in Zion for the toilsome wanderer.

What a day of inspiration it was to a jaded town parson; what a joy to mark the buoyant gladness and loving good fellowship that prevailed among all, from the bonnie children who forgot their restlessness in mute and wide-eyed rapture as soon as singing began, up to the old men with locks of silver upon their heads, but the spirit of eternal youth flashing in their eyes. To be there, was to know the charm of exuberant hospitality and abundant goodwill. To be there was to be bathed in a sea of song, to let the mind pasture on the meads of happiest and holiest memories, and feel the inrush of new energies and new hopes!

The heaven they sang of, they unwittingly brought down to earth, and to us whose inspiration it had been merely to listen, the light that never lay on land or sea, the glow of the ideal life, became as real as the rosy glow of the setting sun which bathed the purple hills that evening with a haze of glory and made the Welsh moors reflect the radiance of Zion.

J. Tyssul Davis.

Man is an empty vessel made to receive the fulness of God.

"Helbeck of Bannisdale."

Mrs. Ward's novels are studies of serious problems, either moral, social, or theological. Her leading men and women are nearly always people with strong definite intellectual convictions, either positive or negative, and her stories are concerned with describing the way in which such men and women act on one another, and on the world. In "David Grieve" she described Manchester individualism of a high and noble kind, and traces its development under the influence first of a French artistic type of character, and secondly of a silly yet well-intentioned and loving Philistinism. In "Marcella" she described a girl's passionate unreflective Socialism in its relation to the stately benevolence and cautious liberalism of aristocracy at its best. In "Sir George Tressady" she described a more robust Langham, a man whose tendency it is to suspect the people, and still more to suspect those who want to help the people. It is the spectacle of a keen, clever critic, a looker-on without hopes or enthusiasm, suddenly awakened by realising a woman's goodness, to the needs and difficulties of the world. In her last novel, Mrs. Ward returns to the lines on which she has been most successful — the lines on which "Robert Elsmere" was written. She describes two people who love each other, but whose religious opinions are entirely opposed. In "Robert Elsmere" love wins; the orthodox, evangelical wife comes to feel that somehow behind the opinions of her husband, which she fears and hates, there is still the spirit of religion, the spirit of worship and love. In her last novel love fails. It is not perhaps so beautiful and strong a love as that between Catherine and Robert, and it is the affection of lovers which ought not to be, and is not in the natural and right course of development so tender and patient as that between husband and wife. Nevertheless, the love is very real and deep, and yet cannot overcome the religious differences.

The study of the two types, the one Roman Catholic, the other Agnostic, is wonderfully sympathetic as well as painstaking. On the one hand she describes a man of an old Catholic family, trained in the best traditions of Catholicism, devoted body and soul to its

forms and doctrines, steeped in its prejudices, inspired by its finest ideals. On the other hand, she describes a girl brought up in the atmosphere of Cambridge agnosticism, a girl to whom Catholicism is simply superstition and folly. It is an agnosticism of a common and very stolid character, not easily to be removed by argument or influence. Her convictions are not even partially the result of reflection and reason; they are wholly the result of her environment. She clings to them not because she understands them, but out of simple loyalty to her dead father. These studies are marked by fine dramatic insight as well as knowledge. In some novels, notably in Charles Kingsley's and Miss E. Lyall's, we have what purport to be appreciative studies of atheism or paganism from the Broad Church point of view; however well-intentioned there is usually a certain condescending tone about them. "You atheists are really very good sometimes" the author seems to say in an accent of surprise. That kind of toleration and mild admiration for those who disagree with us, is irritating if not impertinent. Mrs. Ward has none of it. She is too deep a student of religious history to be surprised to find that goodness is compatible with any and every honest and sincere conviction, by which earnest men try to shape their lives. The Catholic hero is perhaps the most sympathetic and finely drawn picture of a Roman Catholic which has been drawn by a novelist who stands poles asunder from his form of faith. In reading this tragedy, the motive of which is strong difference of religious faith, it strikes us as curious that Shakespeare writing in the Elizabethan age when the nation was becoming divided into Catholics and Puritans, and the differences were accentuating every day, never uses the difference of religious opinions as a motive in his plays to hinder the course of true love. In a well-known passage of the "Midsummer Night's Dream," he enumerates the hindrances from which lovers suffer, but he never mentions religion.

> "For aught that ever I could read
> Could ever hear by tale or history—
> The course of true love never did run smooth,
> But either it was different in blood,
> Or else misgraffed in respect of years,
> Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,
> Or if there was a sympathy in choice
> War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
> Making it momentany as a sound,
> Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
> Brief as the lightning in the collied night—
> That in a spleen unfolds both heaven and earth,
> And ere a man hath power to say behold!
> The jars of darkness do devour it up,
> So quick bright things come to confusion."

Surely in that age there must have been religious hindrances for lovers. Whether it was that Shakespeare felt the thing too serious for artistic treatment or simply that he was not interested in such difficulties it is impossible to say; but certainly when we remember the religious condition of that time, the omission seems curious.

Mrs. Ward's story is a healthy protest against complete carelessnesss about serious opinions which is common to-day. There is a rather light and flippant remark of Mr. Augustine Birrell's which represents the attitude of many people. "It is a very serious thing to differ radically on a question of taste. Were you to be condemned to spend three months at sea, in a small cabin with a stranger, with what easy composure would you hear him the first night declare himself a Hobbist, but how would your heart sink within you were you to hear him aver that he never could see anything funny in Pickwick." There is a certain truth, but there is also a certain danger in the fact to which Mr. Birrell points. There are a great many people who think it more important that they should be able to laugh than that they should be able to pray together, and that in their lighter moods they should not cross each other, than that their serious convictions should be in harmony. It is perfectly true that a common sense of humour is a great bond, but there is much more in humour than mere laughter. The danger in Mr. Birrell's statement lies in the possible interpretation that a common love for Pickwick is more important than a common love for God. The life that is mainly frivolous asks for companions in frivolity; but the life which is in earnest seeks for companions in the love of truth and goodness, and is more dismayed by the absence of these qualities than by a difference of taste.

Mrs. Ward's novel emphasizes the importance of religious convictions and the difficulty that even deep love will find in reconciling them

She teaches that the problem is not hopeless. The reason that love fails to reconcile the Catholic and Agnostic is not, so I understand Mrs. Ward, because love cannot reconcile such differences. It is due to the fact that in this particular case the agnostic is ignorant and prejudiced, and does not understand her own position. "As to these trifles of intellectual difference," says the professor representing the author's own opinions, "look over them, look round them. Rise to your proper dignity and destiny, have a right and natural pride in the rock that bore you. You, a child of the Greater Church, of an authority of which all other authorities are the mere caricatures, why all this humiliation, these misgivings, this turmoil? Take a serener, take a loftier view." Her father had given her no understanding of his position; he had trusted to the passionate loyalty of the woman to his memory, and it did not fail him. She could not feel the beauty and truth of Catholicism as he himself would have done in her place, or as she might have done had she possessed reasoned convictions of her own. The bigot is the man who not only does not understand other people's religion but does not understand his own. He is the man who accepts at second-hand certain principles or opinions and fights blindly for them. In Mrs. Ward's novel the Catholic hero is far more liberal and tolerant, absolutely convinced as he is of the rightness of his point of view, than the agnostic heroine. If she had understood and believed in her own position more thoroughly love would have had more chance of reconciling differences.

This seems the chief lesson of the book, but altogether apart from lessons, it is a fine study of character and a painfully interesting story.

HENRY GOW.

The soul of man is larger than the sky, deeper than the ocean.

Ask the musician how he has attained such perfect mastery of his instrument, and he will say, By incessant toil, and through many difficulties. Ask the man at the forge how his arm became so strong and sinewy, and he will reply, By constant exercise. Ask one whose faith is strong how came it to be so, and the answer will be, Through much tribulation.

From the Anvil to the Pulpit.

PASSAGES FROM THE EARLY LIFE OF THE REV. ROBERT COLLYER, D.D., AS TOLD BY HIMSELF.

HIS PARENTAGE.

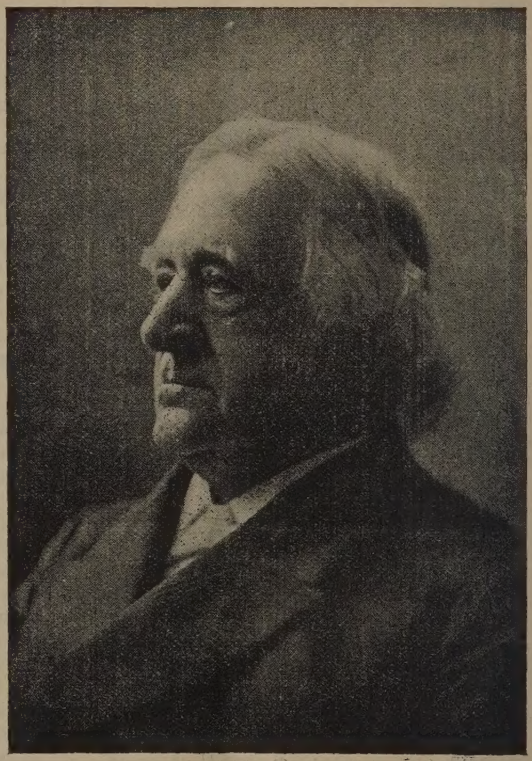
It is a great thing for a man to be well born, for, as the proverb runs, "you cannot make a whistle out of a pig's tail," although when Mr. Lincoln said this once in a speech at the West, an ingenious Yankee sent him such a whistle by the next mail. Still, this is the truth to which the proverb points, that what we call good blood is one condition of success in life, and this, I think, the Collyers can claim. But we cannot claim it as the Admirals can, or the Quinceys, and the fine old families, for we go back to the grandfathers and grandmothers, and there we stop. Both the men were sailors, and both were lost at sea. What I mean by being well born is this—that my own father was one of the most healthful men I ever knew, and my mother one of the most healthful women. He was brown and she was blonde. My father's eyes were dark and soft; my mother's were blue, blended with grey, and could snap fire and make things boom. The family nose juts out strong, and matches the family chin; and, as I have heard Mr. Emerson say, "there is a great deal in noses." My father was as good a smith as ever stood at the anvil, and that was all. He had no other faculty, except that of striking a tune in the little meeting-house, and you were not certain what the tune was going to be until he got to the end of the first line. But my mother was a woman of such faculty—though she could hardly read or write—that I believe if she had been ordered to take charge of a seventy-gun ship and to carry it through a battle, give her time to learn the ropes, and she would do it. She had in her wells of poesy and humour and laughter, and a deep abiding tenderness like that of the saints.

HIS HOME.

Let me make a little picture of the house. A cottage of two rooms and an attic, looking right into the eye of the sun, and away towards the great purple moors. A bit of green sward and a clump of roses; a bright open fire, and the walls white as driven snow; a floor so clean that you could eat your dinner on it and only

hurt the floor; a bureau and chairs so bright that they shone like dim mirrors; the tall old clock we cherish there down in the city; a lot of willow ware for great days; a mirror and pictures that must have cost half-a-dollar each, pictures that Rubens could not have painted to save his life; pure white linen, enough for all uses, and once a week a good, sound scrubbing with yellow soap that got into your eyes, and crash towels from top to toe. "Who hath red eyes, who hath contention, who hath strife?" Solomon cries, and I answer, "the Collyer children in the tub with my mother to work it." But there, and in the snow white purity of fresh linen and eternal scrubbing, was our bulwark from fever; and *there* is one reason why, in these fifty-seven years, I have not been one day sick in my bed. A small shelf of books—Bunyan, Crusoe, Goldsmith's "England," the half of Sandford and Merton, and the Bible, with lots of pictures, the "Young Man's Best Companion," the "Pleasing Instructor," and Fleetwood's "Life of Christ."

Do you want to know how I manage to talk to you in this simple Saxon? I will tell you. I read Bunyan, Crusoe, and Goldsmith when I was a boy, morning, noon, and night. All the rest was task work; these were my delight, with stories in the Bible, and with Shakespeare, when at last the mighty master came within our doors. The rest were as senna to me. These were like a well of pure water, and this is the first step I seem to have taken of my own free will towards the pulpit. I must go to Sunday school, but I could pick my books week-days from that little shelf. I took to them as I took to milk, and without the least idea what I was doing, got the taste for simple words into the very fibre of my nature. There was day school for me until I was eight years old, then I had to turn in and work thirteen hours a day; Sunday school until I was fourteen, and night school for two winters, and all the sunshine the blue-eyed mother could pour through the home, and a careful training in clean ways—no lying, no shirking, and no dishonesty.



REV. ROBERT COLLYER, D.D.

LEARNING A TRADE.

There was another article in our home creed. It was this, that the boys, of which there were four, must learn a trade. It would cost money, but that must be found, and if we went right on in the factory, we could earn instead of spending, but then we should lose our rank, and this was not to be thought of for one instant. The father was a mechanic. We must be mechanics, and then, though we might never rise any higher in the world, we should not fall. And that is how I came to the anvil, the utmost limit in those days of my ambition. There was an old blacksmith, away over the moors, who had taught my

father, and he was willing to teach me. I was rising fourteen then, and it was time to begin.

HIS HUNGER FOR BOOKS.

From the days when we used to spell out Crusoe and old Bunyan, there had grown up in me a devouring hunger to read books. It made small matter what they were so they were books. Half a volume of an old encyclopedia came along, the first I had ever seen. How many times I went through that I cannot even guess. I remember I read some old report of the missionary society with the greatest delight. There were chapters in it about China and Labrador. Yet I think it is in reading as in eating, when the first hunger is over you begin to be a little critical, and will by no means take to garbage if you are of a wholesome nature. I could not go home for the Christmas of 1839, and was feeling very sad about it all, for I was only a boy, and sitting by the fire, an old farmer came on and said "I notice thou's fond o' reading so I brought thee summat to read." It was Irving's Sketch Book. I had never heard of the work. I went at it and was "as them that dream." No such delight had touched me since the old days of Crusoe. I saw the Hudson and the Catkills, took poor Rip at once into my heart, as everybody has, pitied Ichabod while I laughed at him, thought the old Dutch feasts a most admirable thing, and long before I was through, all regrets at my lost Christmas had gone down the wind, and I had found out there are books and books. That vast hunger to read never left me. If there was no candle I poked my head down to the fire, read while I was eating, blowing the bellows, or walking from one place to another. I could read and walk four miles an hour. The world centred in books.

There was no thought in my mind of any good that was to come out of it; the good lay in the reading. I had no more idea of being a minister than you older men, who were boys then in this town, had that I should be here to-night to tell this story. Now, give a boy a passion like this for anything, books, business, painting, or farming, mechanism or music, and you give him thereby a lever to lift his world, and a patent of nobility, if the thing he does is noble. There were two or three of my mind about books. We became companions, and gave the roughs a wide berth. The books did their work too about that drink, and fought the devil with a finer fire. I remember while yet a lad reading Macaulay's great essay on Bacon, and I could grasp its wonderful beauty. There has been no time when I have not felt sad that there should have been no chance for me at a good education and training. I miss it every day, but such chances as were left lay in that everlasting hunger to still be reading. I was tough as leather, and could do the double stint, and so it was that all unknown to myself, I was as one that soweth good seed.

Another thing I remember. It fell out in the course of time that as I would walk over the moors reading, something I read would set me thinking on my own account, and then at last I would talk it out to myself and to the sheep, which I found very good listeners indeed.

HIS CONVERSION AND PREACHING.

At about twenty-one I fell in love "for good and all." I was married at twenty-three, and lost a precious wife at twenty-five. Then came a great darkness, a void and emptiness that was almost unbearable; a great sorrow struck me, and I began groping about for something I could cling to eternally, which ended in my seeking the only refuge there is for a man when the world rocks under him, and life grows dark in the shadow of death. I began to seek after God. I attended the Methodist chapel more regularly, and one Sabbath I heard a sermon by a local preacher named Bland, who is now in charge of a Methodist church at Quebec, from the text, "Blessed and holy are they who have part in the first resurrection." It struck home. There was no revival going on, and but few signs of religious life in the old chapel; but I hardly ate or slept for three weeks, I prayed without ceasing, and tried hard to find the way to the new life. At last the light came, a great and sudden revelation from God. I am sure about this. There is no doubt about it. I went to the week-night meeting and told the Methodists all about it, and they took me on probation, and put me in old Jim Delves's class. They were my old neighbours, had known me for ten years, and, as the habit is in that grand old church, invited me to preach for nothing a Sunday, and find myself. The text of my first sermon was, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death

of a sinner." Oh, I thought I had a capital sermon. It was in three parts, each, of course, indispensable to the other. They didn't allow a man paper in those days, either. Well, I preached, and their curious eyes were all wide open. I thought I had done splendidly, but when half-way back to Ilkley, I recollected that I had left the secondly out entirely. I was terribly put out about it. But the joke of it was that I had stolen my "secondly" from a fine sermon preached by a Presbyterian clergyman named McChine. I felt the weight of that judgment upon me so heavily that I have never stolen a sermon since.

FROM THE OLD WORLD TO THE NEW.

Before I was born, my father wanted to emigrate to America, but could never raise the money, and all through my childhood they were regretting that it still could not be done. So I grew up with the vision of this new world in my nature, and the longing to come here that I might find my way into a wider life. I wanted to be where you do not seek the work but where the work seeks you, to be not a mere cipher in a monarchy, but a factor in a republic. I had no vote and no voice in the government. I wanted one. I was compelled to doff my cap and bend before those who had money and rank. I hated it. Radicalism was in my bones. Radicalism in England thirty years ago was a by-word and a hissing. I found the woman I wanted for a wife. If we had a family there would be no chance of an education for them, or a rise in life. My whole ambition was to make my way as a smith, but fifty cents was all one got for shoeing a horse all round over there, and that left a very small margin.

I had a sort of vision that there was something better for me than life amongst my native moors, but I found that I should have to tear up the roots of my being and plant them in another land before it could come true. I saw in my vision a happy home, in a leafy lane, just outside Philadelphia, because I longed for the country, for I was country bred. I went to my mother and told her all about it. She did not want me to go. She said—"My lad, do not leave me, thou knowest that thou art the only one I can look to, do not go." I said, "Mother, I can be a better son to you in another land than I can in this. Let me go, mother, let me go." "Then, my lad, if thou must go thou must, and God's blessing go with thee." So on a gleaming April day the young wife and husband set sail in an old ship called the Roscius, to seek our fortune, and to find it in this new world.

A MINISTER OF THE LIBERAL FAITH.

You have heard about the preaching. I went at it again, but with the old Yorkshire burr in my tongue, and my h's as it might happen, but usually wrong. One good brother told me years after he could not understand one word in ten that I said, but I made him feel first-rate. I had to learn what was really a new tongue, and worse than that, to unlearn an old one, old almost as Chaucer and Piers Ploughman, and to make my living still at the anvil. You know, I suppose, that there are two sorts of preachers in the Methodist body. One sort finds itself, and the other is found. I had to find myself. Now and then some poor fellow comes along and tells me how little he gets for preaching. I have to pity him from my heart, and then to tell him that my salary divided up among the first ten years came to just seventy-five cents a year (3s. 1½d.), and I got that for three sermons I preached for the Baptists. Yet I was a very happy man, and shall be for ever grateful to my old mother church for giving me the chance. But the time came when I found I was no longer a Methodist. If possible, I read and studied harder than ever, from quitting work till bed-time, and in the early morning. I formed the acquaintance of James and Lucretia Mott, who came to live near us. I soon heard her lecture on the Bible and rational religion, and thought she was about right. I felt that the doctrines of total depravity and eternal damnation were untrue. I had fought shy of them all my life. For three or four years there was a struggle in my heart between love for old associations and friends and the growing and solemn assurance of duty. So I quitted talking and preaching about them altogether. At last I heard Dr. Furness, of Philadelphia, preach on the Nativity of Jesus Christ. I think this sermon clenched my determination to preach a different religion. With God's help I have since done it. It fell out also that I was wanted in the West to work among the poor in my dear old home for twenty

years, Chicago. Then I bid good-bye to the anvil for ever, and so at last struck the supreme joy of my life as a preacher and pastor, and was fairly landed for good and all in the work which has been the joy of my life.

Hark! Hark! a voice amid the quiet intense!
It is thy duty waiting thee without—
Rise from thy knees in hope, the half of doubt—
A hand doth pull thee,—It is Providence!
Open thy door straightway and get thee hence!
Go forth into the tumult and the shout!
Work! Love! with workers, lovers all about!
Of noise alone is born the inward sense
Of silence; and from Action springs alone
The inward knowledge of true love and faith.

G. Macdonald.

There are so many noises that might be spared with advantage, from the exuberance of the caged canary in the small back-parlour to the windy orator in the Park, from the rattle of street cars to the rasping voice of the perpetual fault-finder, from steam "bulls" and "hooters" and other abominations, to the buzzing of the blue-bottle on the window, and the still more intolerable buzzing of the human blue-bottle,—the bore, these, and a thousand like them, are noises which never would be missed—except gratefully.

The Seed Sower;

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE,
FOR THE HOME, THE SCHOOL, AND THE CHURCH.

Localised by Essex Church, London; All Souls, Belfast; Unity Church, London; Great Meeting, Leicester; Mansfield; The Western Union (all the churches); Kidderminster; Old Meeting, Church of the Messiah, and Hurst Street Mission, Birmingham; and other places.

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MR. ARNOLD WOOD,
WHITEHALL CHAMBERS, COLMORE ROW,
BIRMINGHAM.

Summer Woods.

Sing on, sweet birds!
My heart is weary of the endless strife,
The tumult and the whirl of human life.
Low on the grass, beneath the spreading shade
Of cool green boughs, my aching head is laid;
Tired and outspent, I hear each sad sweet note
From the surrounding woodlands softly float.
Sing on, sing on!

Sing low, sweet birds!
For I am sick of all the noise and din,
The strife and tumult of this world of sin.
Loud notes would strike upon my ear in pain,
Fresh torture bringing to the throbbing brain;
But your soft chant is soothing in its flow,
As songs my mother sang me long ago.
Sing on, sing on!

Sing tenderly!
Wounded and weak from many a conflict sore,
I love to hear those soothing strains once more,
Telling me nought of earth, but all of heaven,
Where chains that binds us here shall soon be riven.
Soft woodland voices! grant the sweet relief
Of sympathetic tones to calm my grief.
Sing on, sing on!

Sing me to sleep!
Each sound of human life is far away;
Under green branches western sunbeams play,
And through the stillness of the woods I hear
Only the plashing waters of the mere,
Sighing among the sedges at my feet,
And in the tall tree tops those wood-notes sweet.
Sing on, sing on!

Sing in my dreams!
Still let me feel that gentle melody
Steal through my sleeping spirit peacefully,
Blending its sweetness with the visions bright,
Heaven-sent to soothe me with their strange delight;
Though half unconscious wrapt in dreamy peace,
I should awake were that low song to cease.
Sing on, sing on!

Sing when I wake!
Fill the dim woods with melody divine,
Fill with its echoes this sad heart of mine,
Unstrung and tuneless as a broken lute,
So long to every chord of music mute;
Oh bid it answer to the sweet appeal
Of haunting strains which round its pulses steal!
Sing on, sing on!

Sing on, sweet birds!
Unknown to me the language that ye sing,
Unknown the tender harmonies that ring
In blended concert through the forest dim,
Where breeze and bough and streamlet join the hymn;
I only know that on my heart the while
Peace falleth, e'en as from an angel's smile.
Sing on, sing on!

Rich Men.

An American author is, it is stated, about to publish a sort of "golden book" of the aristocracy of wealth. At the price of £250, or some such figure, a work is to be issued—by subscription, we presume—which will contain a full and particular account of all the millionaires of the world, beginning with the Rothschilds, and going down, we suppose, to the *petite noblesse* of trade and finance,—persons like the late Mr. Lea of Worcester sauce fame, whose will of over a million sterling was proved a month or two ago. Unquestionably, a book of the kind we have indicated should prove very curious and interesting reading. It would probably show the world that its rich men are not, as is often supposed, confined to a few areas, but are scattered about in all the five continents, and appear also in places which are generally supposed not to contain examples of the species. For example, Germany is not generally regarded as a land of rich men, and yet the golden book should have a very large section devoted to Germany and Austria-Hungary. It is true that most of the names would have prince before them, but being of royal blood does not alter the fact of wealth. Without counting the private properties of the Sovereigns, who ought not to be included, there are a dozen or so Teutonic Highnesses whose wealth, not merely in lands but in money, is enormous. For example, that of the father of the present Prince of Bulgaria was counted by many millions sterling. Many of the dethroned monarchs, again, are very rich, for *roi en exil* has ceased to be a synonym for poverty. No one of course knows the exact wealth of the Orleans family, but it is very great, and even the Bourbons are well off. Don Carlos, in spite of the money he has spent on Spanish and other adventures, is a millionaire. The Russian Empire would also make a good show, for although the great landed proprietors have suffered of late years, many of the merchants and financiers have done exceedingly well. If rumour is to be trusted, some of the officials are also very rich. Fabulous sums are attributed to one in particular. The millionaires of Africa would, we suppose, be confined to Kimberley and the Rand, but possibly there are some large fortunes in Cairo among the Levantine colony. Asia will probably make a very respectable show in the American golden book. It is true that in the Turkish and Persian Empires millionaires are never long lived, and this fact tends to their non-existence; but for all that some of the Smyrna Greeks and Damascus Jews ought to be able to gain admission. India, on the other hand, if the native Princes who do not possess sovereign rights are counted, as they must be, contains a great number of extremely rich men. Not only are there merchants in the great cities who are worth several millions in personal property, but there are also four or five great Zemindars who have incomes which represent the interest on two or three millions sterling. The reaction against thinking of India as a place of wealth has, in fact, been carried too far, and we are apt to forget that princely fortunes are still made and kept there. The truth about the Chinese fortunes would be most curious if it could be discovered. Unfortunately, it is the land of the crypto-millionaires, of the men who live in little low houses, and hoard gold ingots in the shape of Naples biscuits. It is known, however, that the Empress-Dowager is among the richest, if not the richest person, alive; while Li Hung Chang —unless he has lately been plundered, which is unlikely—must also have vast wealth. Outside China the Chinese are often very rich, and dare to show their wealth. For example, it is always said, and as far as we know with truth, that several of the Chinese merchants of Singapore are men of enormous riches. With the American millionaire it is hardly necessary to deal. What place is not full of the report of his dollars? It should, however, be noted that though one or two of the American fortunes are beyond the dreams of avarice, the number of "warm men" is, in proportion to population, not so great as it is here. There are, that is, not so many great, but far more small, millionaires in England. The man who reaches the five million dollars is apt either to lose it all again, or else to turn it into fifty or a hundred million dollars. Spanish South America is not as a rule regarded as a place for rich men, yet as a matter of fact, Chili, Mexico, Brazil, and the Argentine have all within the last thirty years produced fortunes on the great scale, and not very long ago the greatest heiress in the world was said

to be the only daughter of a South American millionaire.

We have written thus of the millionaire without apology, acting on the assumption that he and his millions are of universal interest to the world. The fact, indeed, is so plain as to need no proof or comment. What does require comment is the explanation of this universal interest in the millionaire. Why should people be so keenly interested in the existence of exceptional riches? We believe that the interest excited by rich men is derived from the fact that money is power. The man who has command of millions, disguise it as we will, has immense potential authority and influence over his fellows,—and an authority and influence which can be exercised with the minimum of friction. Physical power and legal power may be obeyed, but they are obeyed always without pleasure or enthusiasm, and generally with indignation and disgust. The power of the purse as a rule produces a cheerful and ready obedience. If a man is made to do a thing, he does it grudgingly and without enthusiasm. If he is paid to do it, and thinks he may get another order and another payment, he is happy and full of alacrity. No doubt this fact must not be pressed too far, but it undoubtedly does affect the question. If the feudal superior of a town orders the townspeople to make him a lake, which is to supply the town with water, they only obey out of fear. If a millionaire orders the reservoir to be made, and only pays for the labour at market rates, he is regarded as a great benefactor, and if more favours are expected he can exercise as complete a control over all the proceedings of the town as if he had a legal right of veto. A millionaire's power increases with each million in a rapidly increasing ratio. A man with two or three great houses and establishments, and a yacht and a pack of hounds, may possibly spend the interest of three millions without any great difficulty. At present rates of interest it is only some £90,000 a year. It is when he has a couple of millions beyond, or, say, £60,000 of extra money every year, that his power becomes obvious and real. The fact that he can at any moment throw away £60,000 without pinching himself in the least, diminishing his capital by a sixpence, or altering a single item in his establishment, is the fact that makes the man powerful. However rich a man may be, he is not really powerful if his money is all "booked," all ear-marked for servants, yachts, and racers. It is the free margin in which the source of power is to be found.

But though the ability to spend largely at any moment without feeling it, confers so vast a power, it cannot be denied that practically no millionaires avail themselves of their opportunities. Millionaires are, in truth, envied and wondered at for possessing powers which they never dream of using. We suppose the explanation is that to wield power one requires imagination, and that the acquisition and retention of money destroy the imagination. A millionaire with imagination is, as all will admit, a contradiction in terms. He is never original, never apparently has the slighest desire to have "a run for his money." His object, when the desire for soft living and show is satisfied, is to make his heap bigger, or at any rate to guard it from waste. We note the fact, but we do not regret it. On the contrary, we believe that society gains a great deal from the fact that millionaires are so unimaginative and so unambitious. Were they what one might expect them to be, instead of what they are, they would trouble the State, instead of, as now, acting as quiet reservoirs of cash. Imagine the mischief a group of millionaires might do, if they all agreed to jump and splash and raise waves together. As it is, though the fattest, they are also the quietest of all birds on the duck-pond.

He who should look upon a country from a star, taking a bird's-eye view, would have all parts equally before him, while he who traverses it with slow steps leaves a portion of the territory behind him, and another part is yet before him. So it is with man. Creeping like an insect from leaf to leaf, he leaves something behind, and has something yet before; but God, looking down upon all things at once, serenely fills His own eternal "Now," and sees our ages pass. The Lord has no emergencies; He is never at the end of His resources. Rest then, O fellow pilgrim, in this confidence, that the new road to you is an old road to God.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

A Story of the Birds.

How blest the birds that came with May
To greet the grass and flowers sweet!
How beautiful their summer stay!
But, oh! it seems so short and fleet.
True, they have charmed us with their song,
And built their nests in swaying bowers;
But dreary Autumn comes along,
And then the birds no more are ours!

The while we see them float afar,
And melt in airy line of blue,
There rises clear, like evening star,
A golden thought I'll tell to you,
It is about the Christ-child sweet,
A passing fancy kept of old,
Of how he played in Nazareth's street,
Like life in fairy legend told.

The children found some potter's clay
Wherewith to make what pleased them most.
Right merrily they went to play,
And each to each his skill would boast.
The birds had beauty in their eyes,
And some would seek to shape them well;
But Jesus to their glad surprise,
Would wondrously their skill excel.

He loved them more—as well we know—
Than any one in all the land,
And as a child that love would show,
Like waving of a fairy wand.
He fashioned his with art divine,
A group of silent waiting things;
Then, raising hands in holy sign,
He breathed on them, and gave them wings.

And, lo! they rose to cleave the sky,
And sought afield the wild birds there.
The children gazed, and wondered why
They were so beautiful and fair.
'Tis but a story, so we say,
Yet, when the birds fly to and fro,
Sweet thoughts of fancy sunlike stray
Where winds of autumn never blow.

And there we see, like humming-birds,
Which flash and flutter in the flowers,
A spirit far too deep for words,
That all our soul with praise empowers;
And we can learn a lesson clear
From these dear children in their play,
And how most truly birds appear,
Which will not ever fly away.

The legend means but only this,—
A lovely heart, all kind and true,
Will give to everything pure bliss;
And, children, this is done by you.

It is a common wonder sight,
Richer than all the stories tell,
A blessing on the mind that's right,
Wherever we may chance to dwell.

Perhaps a pleasant word of love,
Or rippling laugh in goodness given,
May be to one like gentle dove
Or like a lark that soars to heaven;
And, when the birds no more are here,
You'll think about such beauteous things,
Which sing sweet songs all love's bright year,
And fly about on golden wings.

WILLIAM BRUNTON.

When Bedtime Comes Too Soon.

The clocks don't know their A, B, C's,
And so they cannot spell;
But yet they count much more than I,
And seem to count quite well.

But what good so much counting does
I'd really like to know,—
Just sending people off to bed
Before they want to go.

ST. NICHOLAS.

Be Yourself.

Never try to hold a bushel, if designed to hold a peck,
Or outreach the cranes and camels with your half an inch of neck;
Never try to race with dolphins, if you cannot even swim,
Or to challenge hawks for vision, if your eyes be old and dim.
Never spread a grain of butter over fifty yards of bread,
Or attempt with penny trumpets to awaken up the dead.

Not every stick of timber that is fit to make a mast,
Not every structure builded is a pyramid to last.
Not every piece of music is an anthem or a psalm,
Not every growing sapling is a pine or lofty palm;
Yet every mossy atom has its own peculiar grace,
And each its perfect usefulness or beauty in its place.

These truths are old and hoary; yet we need them every day,
To reconcile our longings to the limits of our way.
The only true philosopher is he who learns content,
Though quartered in a palace or but sheltered in his tent,
Whose cheerful soul is ready to encompass what it can,
Nor vex itself in criticising God's eternal plan.